EDITORIALS - 7TH NOV 2026

1. TACKLING AIR POLLUTION REQUIRES SCIENCE-BASED PLAN, NOT JUST GRAP (GS PAPER III ENVIRONMENT)

This editorial '**Tackling air pollution requires science-based plan, not just GRAP**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 7th Nov 2026, highlights the need for science-based **airshed planning** and sustained **emission reduction** beyond **emergency restrictions**.

Pollution Control and Meteorological Influences

- Delhi's **Winter Action Plan**, commencing November 1, introduced vehicle-entry restrictions, "No PUCC, No Fuel" and construction curbs; **"Very Poor" air quality** on day one exposed gaps in mitigation.
- Peak pollution was delayed almost two weeks, potentially reflecting **Super El Niño**, a milder winter and Cyclone Arnab-associated rainfall; sluggish winds favoured accumulation, consistent with NIAS research linking **ENSO** and air pollution.

Emission Measurement and Forecasting Gaps

- **Rainfall deficits** delayed paddy harvesting in Punjab and Haryana; shifting fire timings increasingly undermine **MODIS** detection because satellite overpasses miss fires lit later or already extinguished.
- Over **90%** of Punjab's stubble-burning events reportedly occurred after 3 p.m. during 2024–2025, against under **3%** in 2021; this timing mismatch has intensified since 2023.
- South Korea's **KOMPSAT-2A**, using its geostationary **Advanced Meteorological Imager**, continuously observes agricultural fires, revealing counts orders of magnitude above official estimates.
- Incorporating realistic stubble emissions enabled **NIAS modelling** to reproduce November 1's measured pollution surge, attributing approximately **20%** of Delhi's PM2.5 burden to stubble burning; historical averages and conventional fire counts weaken forecasts.

Airshed Planning and Sustained Mitigation

- Without an **airshed approach**, Delhi would address only **50–70%** of contributing emission sources, excluding additional stubble-burning contributions; city-boundary planning therefore leaves substantial sources uncovered.
- A NIAS study under the Principal Scientific Adviser's Office proposes **AIR-SHEDM**, enabling near-**100% source coverage** through airshed master planning across an administratively feasible area between Delhi NCT and the entire NCR.
- **GRAP** provides emergency relief during pollution peaks but entails repeated public inconvenience; lasting improvement requires **structural emission reduction** targeting underlying causes.

- Over the next 30–40 days, stubble burning and unstable weather could converge; deeper winter may compound pollution through local and transported fog, slower winds and an **ENSO-linked** decline in **western disturbances**.
- **Year-round mitigation** must address junction congestion, poorly maintained roads, ineffective traffic management and open waste burning through sustained **science-based implementation**.

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Environmental Justice in Air Pollution Governance

- **Occupational exposure:** NCDC identifies prolonged outdoor work as a vulnerability, requiring targeted protection for traffic police, street vendors and sanitation workers.
- **Child vulnerability:** WHO's 2018 assessment found 93% of children below 15 exposed to particulate pollution above its guidelines, supporting child-sensitive interventions.
- **Household inequality:** WHO identifies women and children as bearing the greatest burden from polluting household fuels, requiring protection beyond outdoor pollution.
- **Livelihood protection:** CAQM's December 2021 directions required wages and subsistence during construction bans, recognising pollution restrictions' burden on daily-wage workers.
- **Residential disadvantage:** West Oakland's community action plan targets concentrated diesel exposure, illustrating neighbourhood-specific protection for communities near freight corridors.
- **Community participation:** West Oakland's resident-led Environmental Indicators Project co-developed its clean-air plan with regulators, embedding affected communities in pollution governance.
- **Targeted protection:** US EPA's 2024 Community Change Grants framework included indoor filtration and school-building remediation to protect disadvantaged communities.

2. TO ATTRACT FOREIGN CAPITAL, WELCOME IT LOUDLY AND CLEARLY (GS PAPER III ECONOMY)

This editorial '**To attract foreign capital, welcome it loudly and clearly**' was published in **The India Express** on 7th Nov 2026, highlights the need to **overhaul** India's foreign investment framework to reduce **restrictions** and **transaction friction**.

Foreign Investment Framework and Structural Constraints

- **Net FDI** fell from about $44 billion in FY2021 to below $1 billion in FY2025; draft **Foreign Investment Rules** simplify provisions and harmonise definitions but leave structural barriers intact.
- Attracting capital requires an explicit welcome and minimal execution friction; **Section 6 of FEMA** instead makes **capital account transactions** prohibited unless specifically permitted, rendering investment rules exceptions to default restrictions.

- **Sectoral controls** prohibit foreign capital in real estate business and cap digital media, broadcasting, multi-brand retail and pensions; extensive **capital controls** make India an outlier alongside China, unlike OECD economies.
- Even open sectors face **transaction-level regulation** of instruments, recipient entities and prices; mandatory **certified valuations** for unlisted-share transfers constrain negotiation, with draft rules narrowing flexibility further.
- Suspected **tax evasion** should be addressed after transactions rather than through **ex-ante controls**; earlier global investor interest and low interest rates concealed regulatory weaknesses now imposing economic costs.

Principles for Reform

- **Capital-flow restrictions** should be cautious, temporary, transparent and limited to emergency management of **macroeconomic risk**.
- **National security screening** needs checks, balances and interdepartmental assessment of security risks against investment costs; nationality-based **Press Note 3** required broader institutional involvement than DPIIT alone, with US and UK screening bodies offering examples.
- **Rulemaking** should include public consultation, cost-benefit analysis and review; **FSLRC** recommends concentrating restrictions at entry and subsequently treating foreign investors comparably to domestic investors.
- Controls should ensure **neutrality** towards investment vehicles and investor identity, with every restriction tied to an identified **market failure**.
- Existing **expert committee reports** by Tarapore, Percy Mistry, U K Sinha and FSLRC provide foundations for a deeper **FEMA overhaul**.

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Assessing the Developmental Quality of Foreign Investment

- **Technology transfer:** Costa Rica's Intel experience illustrates industrial upgrading; investment quality depends on domestic capabilities and knowledge diffusion beyond capital inflows.
- **Employment quality:** OECD's FDI Qualities Indicators assess job quality, skills and gender equality, extending evaluation beyond investment volumes and employment numbers.
- **Domestic linkages:** OECD finds weak multinational–domestic firm linkages in Vietnam, highlighting the need for supplier development to spread investment benefits.
- **Regional dispersal:** OECD recommendations for Vietnam extend supplier support beyond industrial hubs, making geographical distribution a criterion of investment quality.
- **Productive additionality:** Samsung's 2018 Noida expansion planned annual capacity growth from 68 million to 120 million phones, illustrating measurable productive expansion.

- **Investment composition:** OECD's fifth Benchmark Definition distinguishes greenfield projects, capacity extensions, acquisitions and restructuring, separating productive expansion from ownership changes.
- **Environmental contribution:** Renewables' share of global greenfield FDI rose from 1% in 2003 to 26% in 2023, highlighting investment's decarbonisation potential.

3. AGNIPATH REVISION MUST BE JUDGED BY WHAT IT DOES TO INSTITUTION IT WAS MEANT TO REFORM (GS PAPER II GOVERNANCE)

This editorial '**Agnipath revision must be judged by what it does to institution it was meant to reform**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 7th Nov, highlights the need to assess Agnipath's revision against **military effectiveness, technical competence** and **service conditions.**

Revision and Its Implications

- On **November 4**, the Cabinet approved a second **two-year engagement** for the 75% of Agniveers otherwise leaving after four years, providing relief to approximately 18,000 approaching discharge.
- Longer engagement unsettles Agnipath's assumptions of a younger force, reduced **pension liabilities** through 25% regular absorption, and **civilian reintegration** of the remainder; age and savings projections require recalculation.
- **Regular absorption** remains conditional; those rejected after six years enter civilian employment two years older, potentially without promised **employment support**, while the CDS questions the need for police and paramilitary reservations.

Military Effectiveness and Technical Competence

- **Military effectiveness** depends on progression from recruits to skilled operators, supervisors and junior leaders; the initial engagement restricts advancement through this **professional hierarchy**.
- By year six, recruits absorbed at four years gain regular-service training, promotion and pay progression; second-engagement personnel receive unspecified **seniority benefits**, rank below the first-selected cohort and lack clarity on **career progression**.
- Former naval artificers completed **four-year apprenticeships** followed by sustained technical careers; diploma-entry Agniveer apprentices must subsequently qualify for regular service, making **expertise retention** dependent on uncertain career continuity.
- Sophisticated equipment requires accumulated **technical competence**; exemptions for certain medical technical cadres recognise lengthy skill development, while avionics, radar maintenance and marine engineering raise comparable **operational readiness** concerns.

Service Entitlements and Institutional Accountability

- In **Ex Navy Direct Entry Artificers Association v Union of India (2018)**, the Supreme Court noted apprenticeship counted towards pension eligibility; although inapplicable to

Agnipath, it underscores unresolved **qualifying-service** treatment before regular enrolment.

- The claimed **objective assessment** does not demonstrate delivery of promised force structure, competence or savings; evidence and consequences require scrutiny by **Parliament's Standing Committee on Defence**.
- **Retention** should reflect service and trade requirements, protect technical cadres and publish six-year selection criteria early; second-engagement personnel need training access and clear **service entitlements** covering promotion, qualifying service and pensions.

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The Psychological Contract of Military Service

- **Institutional belonging:** British Army guidance identifies regimental loyalty, trade badges and recognition as sources of belonging, suggesting reforms should assess institutional identification.
- **Perceived fairness:** The UK's 2025 military survey found 73% felt fairly treated at work, illustrating measurable assessment beyond formal service conditions.
- **Unit cohesion:** US Army Cohesion Assessment Teams examine trust, leadership interactions and harmful behaviour, broadening evaluation beyond recruitment and retention figures.
- **Psychological support:** India's 2024 agreement for a Tele-MANAS cell at AFMC Pune illustrates military mental-health support relevant to assessing service-related uncertainty.
- **Grievance redress:** The UK's Service Complaints process covers bullying, discrimination and improper conduct, enabling personnel to challenge perceived unfair treatment.
- **Family welfare:** A UK parliamentary inquiry linked poor military accommodation with morale and retention problems, highlighting family conditions within the service relationship.
- **Reciprocal obligation:** The UK Armed Forces Covenant recognises obligations towards personnel, veterans and families, extending institutional care beyond contractual pay and tenure.